

[By Gordon Dritschilo, Rutland Herald](#)

People in Rutland County talked about their problems, and Rep. Peter Welch talked about how he thinks he can solve them.

Welch, a Democrat, answered questions from about a dozen callers during a telephone town meeting for residents of Rutland County. The conference call was one in a series Welch is doing for constituents around the state. Staffers from Welch's office said 406 people participated in the call.

The questions covered subjects from health care to dairy farming.

On health care, Welch said he strongly supported the public option and wants to see it in the final reform bill.

He also expressed skepticism about tort reform, saying that Vermont doctors don't get sued as often as in other states and that Vermont juries tend not to award excessive verdicts, but that malpractice premiums in the state are still high.

"The real waste in medical spending generated ... by excessive utilization," he said. "If you're doing more procedures than you need to do, that is waste and we need to get at that, but that's system reform."

In response to a woman worried about the loss of jobs from Rutland County, Welch said the nation needs to build up its industrial base and move toward a trade policy that does not encourage flight of jobs. He said the United States needs to make sure its trading partners have decent labor and environmental standards.

Welch responded to questions about the bank bailout by saying he would have been willing to let the banks fail, but that he worried about who they might have dragged down with them. He said he wanted to see credit card reform and a policy against energy speculation.

Welch said he and colleagues in the House have reformed the "dairy caucus" and that he is working to improve conditions for Vermont farmers.